SIDNEY CALLAHAN on recovered memories

COMMONWEAL

$2.00 December 17, 1993

• GO AWAY! WE'RE CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS •

• THE 'RED' BISHOP OF CHIAPAS • Alberto Huerta

A FOREST PILGRIMAGE • Anne Porter / REVIEWS

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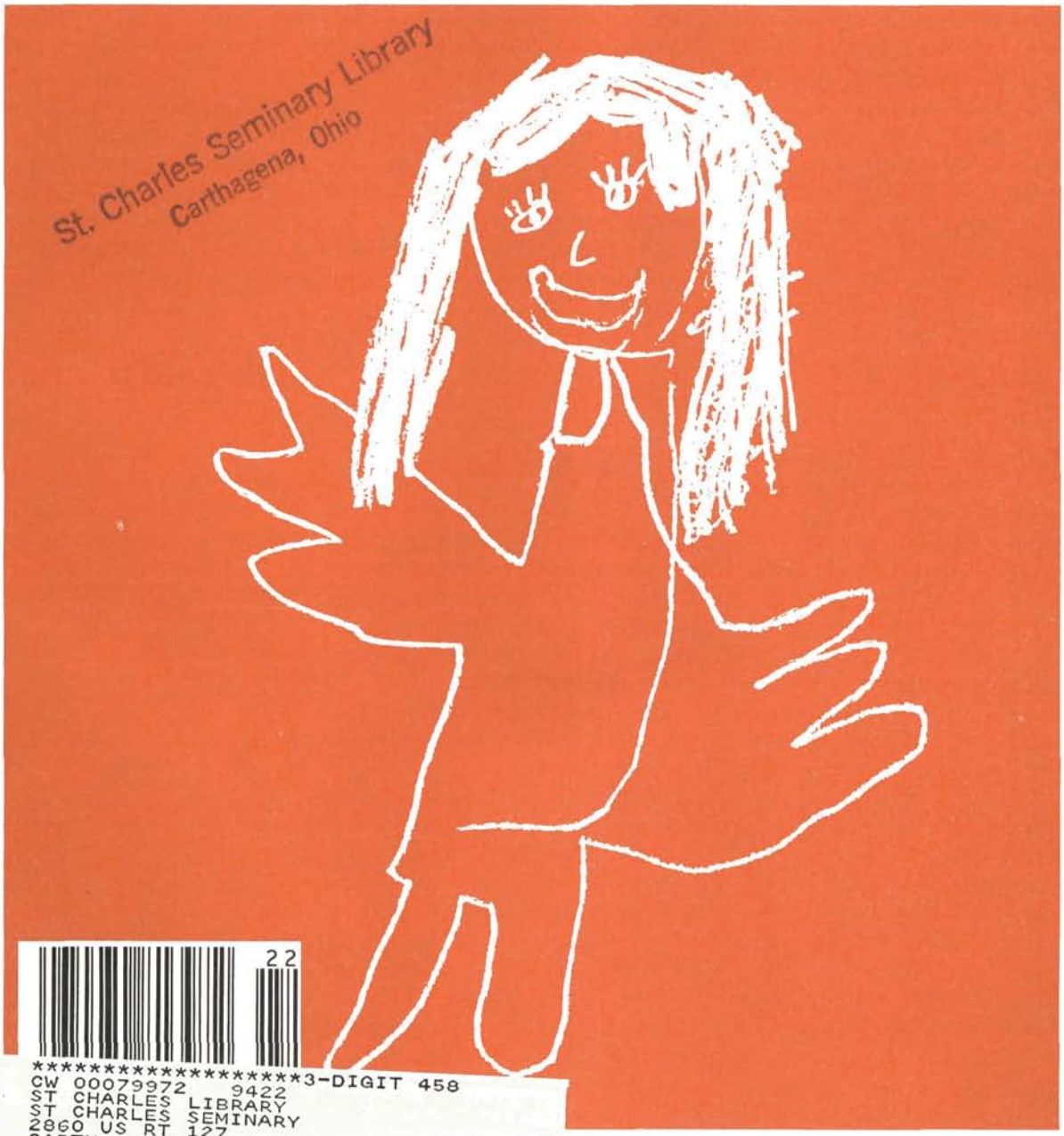

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CORRESPONDENCE

Good out of Nazareth

Saint Paul, Minn.

To the Editors: Mary Pat Kelly's report of her interview with Hanan Ashrawi [October 8] was a humanizing addition to the reports on the complicated strategies of the Palestinian and Israeli peace talks. It reminds us of the tenacity of God's grace to move people to do the seemingly impossible.

I thought one quote in the interview delightful for its secondary meaning. Asked for the sources of support for her nontraditional ways as a Palestinian woman, Dr. Ashrawi responded: "[My husband] was originally from Nazareth. He's one of the few men who don't measure their value by the oppression they exercise over women. He's not insecure at all...."

Those Nazarenes can still surprise us.

VICTOR J. KLIMOSKI

Talk English!

Houston, Tex.

To the Editors: The reason that English must be our official language has nothing to do with questions of national loyalty or ethnic prejudice. Contrary to the sentiments of John Francis Burke ["Multiculturalism Is Here," November 5], we must have a national language primarily for its *unifying* aspects. People simply get along better when able to communicate verbally with one another. I cannot be accused of hypocrisy. Earlier in our history some efforts were made to give the language of my German ancestors a certain official status equal to English. Thank God this inadvertent attempt at divisiveness failed. We can only hope that today's well-meaning multilingual advocates meet the same fate.

The American experience has always taken the best offered by its diverse ethnic groups. What cannot be reconciled with or survive our melting pot's cultural demands eventually withers away. The historical evidence shows that new immigrants readily accept our liberal democratic political values. That is all we have the right to demand. After that, the other problems of assimilation quickly fall by the wayside.

DAVID THOMSON

Is that clear, luv?

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Surely the last word of the final paragraph of John Garvey's excellent column, "Love your enemy" [November 19] should read "charity" and not "clarity." Am I right?

(REV.) M.R.BECKER

From the editors: No. But take heart. The author himself, thinking we might jump to the same wrong conclusion, phoned to make sure we didn't change the "l" to "h." He seems to argue that, though charity is the greatest of virtues, you need clarity to achieve it. Or maybe it's the other way around. Garvey writes: "We can see the enemy clearly only when we see the enemy with love."

TV, kids & crime

Minneapolis, Minn.

To the Editors: Responding to readers who condemned his sycophantic review of "NYPD Blue" [October 8], Frank McConnell condescendingly answers: "Guys, it's a show." He then intones the familiar libertarian formula, "The moral choice to watch or not watch...is yours; it is wrong to deny others that same choice" [November 5].

McConnell ignores the urgent, obvious, and overriding issue, the socialization of children. Everyone knows that millions of children in this country have no effective supervision whatever of their television watching. We all are responsible for the way those children are socialized by the networks.

The past two years have brought forth study after study (led by Dr. Brandon Centerwall's noted articles in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *The Public Interest*) correlating children's exposure to television violence with rising rates of violent behavior. Centerwall estimates that television conditioning is implicated in roughly 10,000 homicides and 70,000 rapes in the United States each year. Add to this vast increases in teenage sexual activity, pandemic abortion, Spur Posse depredations, and deadbeat fatherhood, and reflect on the fact that some 85 percent of the sex scenes featured on network programming involved unmarried people.

The ugly truth about our culture is that we corrupt our young for the sake of titillating ourselves with salacious and violent entertainment. Now Steven Bochco has cynically ratcheted up the level of eroticism, violence, and incivility shaping the minds of children. And *Commonweal*'s media analyst stands by uncritically cheerleading and homilizing over "moral choices"!

JOHN D. HAGEN, JR.

John Paul II & Barth

Queens, N.Y.

To the Editors: Heartfelt thanks for your helpful issue [October 22] on the pope's new encyclical. As one engaged in adult catechetics, I am extremely grateful, es-

(Continued on page 28)

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COMMONWEAL

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Jesus, the realist

Comfort ye my people. These commanding words of Isaiah (40:1) are not consoling. Like many words from Scripture they are a demanding, realistic call to action. They deserve a response.

Consider the testimony of two former students at Saint Anthony's, until 1987 a Franciscan high-school seminary in Santa Barbara, California. Both were sexually abused by faculty members: *"How could God have allowed this to happen if he truly cares?"* And, *"I believe God has a twisted sense of humor, and he uses me for his amusement."* These are calls for relief in affliction. They are also damning phrases, as searing in their way as Jesus' condemnation: "Better for those who cause the downfall of such children to have millstones hung around their necks and be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 8:6). The revelations in Santa Barbara add to the juggernaut of accusations and disclosures about the sexual misconduct of Catholic religious and clergy. As in the parable of Jeremiah's loincloth (13: 1-11), those bound closest to God have profaned others; they are "ruined and good for nothing."

Like Jeremiah, Jesus was a realist. He not only understood scandal, he foretold it: "Such occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to those through whom they come" (Matt. 18:7). This Christmas we would do well to reflect on Jesus' realism. It is the only thing likely to deliver us from despair: despair at our own failures and the desecration of our ideals; despair at the state of a world in need of redemption.

In a Christological reflection that drives to the heart of the matter, British theologian Brian Hebblethwaite (*The Incarnation*, Cambridge, 1987), explained why it was necessary for God to become human in order to redeem us. By becoming a man, God "takes upon *himself* responsibility for all the world's ills." Not through some surrogate, but as very God. In Jesus, God subjects himself to all the cruelty and horror of evil and human suffering. "By so doing, he reveals, as he could in no other way, the reality and depth and costly nature of his forgiving love."

The problem remains, of course, that while God has indeed come among us, he allows historical events to take their human course. No magic bullets. No end to death, perfidy, or injustice. The nature of God's supreme care for us is precisely that he has become our fellow sufferer: Jesus, the child shivering in a manger; his parents pursued by a ruthless government; the man Jesus falsely accused and hung on a cross. With us, for us, and from us, he will suffer until the end of time. God's salvation is manifest in precisely that suffering. And while we will no doubt continue to mock God's powerlessness, he will know our jaundiced humor from the human side.

Earlier this year, the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibited Andrea del Verrocchio's 500-year-old heroic bronze sculpture, *Christ and Saint Thomas*. Completed in 1483, the piece's two eight-foot-tall statues were exposed for centuries in an outdoor niche in Florence. Brought to New York after a painstaking restoration (in which much,

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but not all, of the work's original luster, was restored), the work is a triumph. What is most striking about the set is the figure of Christ—he simultaneously beckons to Thomas to touch his wounded side and blesses the recalcitrant Apostle. Christ's powerful right hand nearly dances above Thomas's head. But most remarkable is that the whole figure of Christ seems to be recoiling from the piercing pain about to be inflicted by Thomas's touch. Here is power and vulnerability perfectly wed: Christian theology in its highest and most graphic expression.

This Christmas, as every Christmas, we need such art, such realism, such recognition. God indeed has come to share our sufferings. But woe to us who cause others to stumble.

NOTEBOOK

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

THE BIRTH OF A FAMILY

It's my turn to write a "Notebook." I don't want to; too much is happening in my life and what's happening is too utterly primal, many-sided, unplumbable. For the very same reasons, I *do* want to write the column. The way out of this impasse, I hope, is to borrow from two light-hearted communications distributed by my wife, Mig Boyle, and me, having to do with the Big Happenings, and then to touch ever so lightly on matters of moment, depth, and meaning. For the most part, you the reader will have to read between the lines to penetrate the persiflage.

The first of our two messages was a memorandum addressed to the "Liturgy and Liquefaction Coalition," my nickname for a group that has been gathering in its members' homes once a month or so for lo, these several decades, to worship, talk, dine, and hoist a few. The memo asked the other members to accept a new body into the group—even though "she has not yet been shriven" and "does not yet have a full name."

This was a way of leading into an improbable announcement: Mig and I were (gulp! wow!) adopting a baby girl. Pause for exultation.

At that point we hadn't even seen our soon-to-be daughter, but we could give some standard data: Born four-and-a-half weeks early; 5.03 pounds; 18 3/4 inches; doing well. Birth mother twenty-two, Irish-Catholic background, already a mother but unable to provide for a second child. So much for origins. About the baby's future, we predicted that, having already worked a couple of miracles (on us, *in absentia*), she will be "the first pope to be canonized in her own lifetime, along with her husband."

One vexing issue was resolved when the adoption agency told us (at the last possible moment) that we couldn't walk away with our daughter—she might not even *be* our daughter—unless and until we gave her a name. Without that pressure, she might have reached college age sort of anonymously. Mig said we had to see her first. When the baby was placed in Mig's arms we looked at her, wept a bit, then at each other and agreed that she wasn't Elizabeth or Maureen or Ermegilda. It was perfectly obvious that she was "Sarah."

Or, in full, "Sarah Boyle Hoyt," a name first put to formal use at the heading of a Fed X message accepting another new arrival, one Andrew Michael Boyle, into her cousinship. Andrew is the newly minted son of Susan and Michael Boyle; he entered history the day after Sarah had enjoyed a baby shower in her honor attended by numerous Boyles and Hoyts. With the benefit of this experience, and with the help of several amanuenses, Sarah was able to inform Andrew of things to come: "I've had occasion to observe at VERY close range that you have a wonderful wide family who will google and coo at you and hand you around from lap to lap and tickle your toes and pat your head and feed your face and wipe your bottom and make funny faces till you'll wish you were back in the womb."

So much for cuteness and kitsch. I've just interrupted this writing to go and hold Sarah. She was placid and solemn. I was able, with effort, to outstare her; but she warmed me more than I warmed her. She doesn't yet know she has cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and—most significantly (to me)—a set of siblings: my six children by a previous marriage, some of whom have offspring of their own who are, astonishingly, Sarah's nephews and nieces. Think about it, as did my youngest grandchild, Timmy, four years old; on first meeting Sarah he said, "She's my *aunt*? She hasn't even seen a *dog* yet!"

Again, cute. It doesn't adequately clarify the subtext. Sarah's siblings have cause to worry about her. I'm seventy-one-going-on-seventy-two. On the record, I am not now and have never been a model father. Mig and I have some interactive neuroses that may be interesting to counselors but won't be to Sarah. There is ample reason for some angst. But there are countervailing factors as well. Sarah enters not one but two wide and wonderful families and a circle of friends beyond compare. For the nonce, at least, we have incredibly deft and gentle live-in help. And Sarah is beautiful. It was correct that she arrived in time for Thanksgiving. Even more appropriately, she'll be on hand for Christmas, when all babies are seen anew, and rightly, as blessings, gifts, miracles. Welcome, Sarah. Thanks for coming. ROBERT G. HOYT

A CHRISTMAS NOTE FROM SCOTLAND

BE OF FEW WORDS

HER MAJESTY'S WAR ON VERBOSITY

There I was, standing in line at the post office again my arms full of letters to send home to the U.S from Scotland, when the hand-written notice caught my eye. Substantially reduced posta rates would be available for the holidays, the Royal Mail announced, for unsealed greeting cards containing no more than five words in addition to the printed mes

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age and the sender's name.

Five words? Five measly words? Heavens, why bother? I vondered to myself, rearranging the slippery stacks of thick extra-postage-required) envelopes I was carrying. What on earth ould one say that is worth saying in five words or less?

I beguiled my time in the queue by pondering this weighty uestion. "Merry Christmas—Happy New Year," would of ourse fit within the required brevity. But unless the card's rinted message was more than usually beside the point, this vould surely be redundant, as well as being rather obvious, nd unimaginative in the extreme. There was the urgently elegraphic and classically melodramatic "All discovered—lee at once," moderately unorthodox as Christmas greetings o but unarguably five words. The awkwardly banal "All vell here—how there?" also briefly occurred to me, but on he whole I felt the five-word limit reflected a stinginess unecoming a Royal Mail, and dismissed the matter from my nind.

Then, unbidden, my memory produced the haunting final mesage of Etty Hillesum, scribbled on a scrap of paper and tossed rom the window of a train bound for the death camps: "Tell hem we left singing."

Five words. Five measly words. Containing whole worlds f sorrow, love, and courage.

So. Maybe it was possible to communicate meaningfully in ive words or less. Christmas greetings aside, perhaps there were noments in human experience—and instances in the English anguage—where the *mot juste* was just five.

I posted my letters (paying a shocking penalty for the privlege of verbosity) and walked back across town, muttering o myself and counting on my fingers, intrigued as by a crossvord puzzle by Her Britannic Majesty's pentagrammic chalenge. I began rummaging in my rag-bag English-major mind or quotations, recalling Elizabeth Barrett Browning's paralel fives: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways" (which vould presumably have cost her double), and Emily Dickinson's uccinct "I'm nobody—who are you?" I remembered Emilia's nguished "Who hath done this deed?" From *Othello* III:5, nd Desdemona's dying (and even more condensed) reply: 'Nobody: I myself. Farewell."

I was hooked. All the rest of that day, and well into the folowing week, I found myself weighing the treasures of the English anguage in postal scales. I counted (under my breath) the words f my favorite poems, of famous quotes, of conversations overeard in the street.

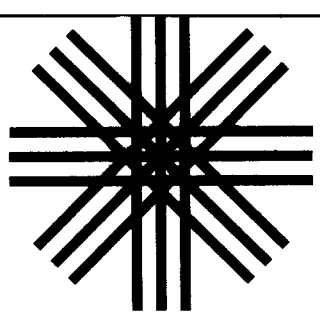
Then I turned my search to Scripture, and was overwhelmed y fives. I was astounded to discover, leafing through my Bible, ow many of the passages I had marked over the years hapened to consist of five words. Many of the most powerful promses in all of Holy Writ are wholly writ in fives. (In English ranslation at any rate—whether the original Hebrew and Greek re even more austerely economical, I do not, alas, know.)

God's word to Moses by the light of the burning bush, "I vill be with you," Jesus' triumphant "I have overcome the world," nd Mary Magdalene's ringing Easter witness "I have seen the ord," all are cinquefoil, as it were.

The next issue of *Commonweal* will be dated January 14, 1994.

So many of Jesus' words are familiar to us in clusters of five: "I am the good shepherd." "Your faith has healed you." "Rise and have no fear." "My peace I leave you." The Hebrew Scriptures as well bloom with five-petaled flowers: "I know you by name." "I will send an angel." "Love is strong as death." Similarly, the vision of Saint John at Patmos—the insight that "death shall be no more"—manages to express one of our faith's essential convictions in five little words. And there is the divine economy of "light shines in the darkness" and "This Jesus God raised up." Perhaps my own personal favorite—one wonder of brevity set like a gem in another—is: "Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'"

It is not only blessed assurance that comes in quinary, of course. Think of the serpent in Eden, beguiling Eve with "You will be like God." Or one of Abraham's least golden moments when, surrounded by lascivious Egyptians, he whispered to Sarah, "Say you are my sister."



THE GRAYMOOR PRIZE

Bound by tradition and custom, the COMMONWEAL editors have once again awarded the Graymoor Prize to two authors. Our winners this year are Father Brian O'Rourke, C.S.Sp., of Arusha, Tanzania, for his reflections on Catholic-Lutheran relations in East Africa, and Dr. Jacob Tesfai of Strasbourg, France, for his discussion of the World Council of Churches and third-world theologies. The $1,000 prize has been divided between the two winners. The essays will be published in our January 14, 1994 issue.

We would like to thank all those who submitted manuscripts for this year's prize, and we would especially like to thank the Friars of the Atonement for sponsoring the essay contest, which has the important goal of encouraging new ecumenical ideas and perspectives.

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Admonitions seem naturally to lend themselves to pentamerous compression: Scripture positively brims with five-leaved proverbs and aphorisms: "Go and sin no more," "Serve the Lord with gladness." Similarly, some of the most poignant prayers in the Bible consist of five words: "Lord have mercy upon me." "Make haste to help me." "I believe: help my unbelief." And Thomas's unforgettable, utterly unambiguous, "My Lord and my God."

Desolation as well seems to fit into quintupled phrases: the devastating "and they all forsook him" could be a Holy Week meditation all by itself; as of course could Jesus' cry from the cross: "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" And for me, one of the most perfect visual brushstrokes in the Gospels is the detail from the story of the disciples on the Emmaus road: "They stood still, looking sad."

The more I browsed, the more I came up with handfuls of fives. Her Majesty's limitation, which at first had seemed so arbitrary and unreasonable—so ungenerous—began to appear almost recklessly extravagant. After all, so many powerful sayings were compact in four words—Mother Julian's visionary "All shall be well," for instance. And how could Peter have borne another syllable in Jesus' piercing "Do you love me?"

Come to think of it, some deeply significant affirmations, invitations, promises, dramas, and blessings, consist of three words: "So Abram went." "He is risen!" "Come and see." "Go in peace." "Jesus is Lord."

Or two! I recalled how moved I had been, on the remote Hebridean Isle of Iona, by the inscription on the watchtower of the lonely abbey church: "Stand fast." What compressed sorrow lies in "Jesus wept," what immensities of self-offering are implied in "Yes, Lord."

For that matter, didn't one word often say what most needed to be said? Surely "Alleluia" and "Amen" are all we really need most of the time.

By the end of the week (much of which I spent secretly counting the words of, and lamenting the excesses of, telephone conversations, newspaper headlines, and public service announcements on the radio), I was convinced that five words—or four, or three, or even two—can speak volumes. Just as a memorable meal can be prepared from a few simple ingredients, so can a feast of meaning be conveyed by an apparent dearth of words. There is a lesson for my loquacious spirit here, a deep learning about fasting and feasting, about self-discipline, about simplicity and silence.

Perhaps Emily Dickinson summed it up when she observed that "the banquet of abstemiousness effaces that of wine" (even if it did take her eight words to say it).

DEBORAH SMITH DOUGLAS

Deborah Smith Douglas is a writer, wife, and mother who has been weighing her words on a sabbatical in Scotland.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Sidney Callahan

MEMORY CAN PLAY TRICKS

AND SO CAN THERAPISTS

The recent allegation of sodomy leveled at Cardinal Joseph Bernardin has raised questions about the phenomenon of recovered memory. Perhaps certain psychological findings can help sort through the present morass. The first fact we have to confront is that persons who appear to be normal or even moral can secretly indulge in acts of sexual victimization of those in their care. Clerical pedophilia, clerical sexual abuse, and incest occur and cause horrible pain and psychological suffering for their victims. But at the same time, "false memories" also exist as a psychological fact of life. Not all claims and accusations of sexual abuse, pedophilia, or incest, are true.

As psychologists study the processes of human perception, imagination, emotion and cognition, it has become clear that illusory memories of past events can be constructed. The human mind and memory do not process information like a computer in which discrete data go into storage and can be retrieved, intact, on command. Human memories are much more complex. They are reconstructed narratives of the past, subject to many personal vicissitudes. Unreliable false accounts, even

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ighly distorted eyewitness reports can emerge as though truly remembered.

Moreover, once a false memory has been created, the imagined reconstruction may be elaborated, rehearsed, and heavily invested in as a true account. It is important to realize that what psychologists have called "confident confabulations" are not the same thing as malicious lies which are consciously devised to deceive or harm others. Of course people do lie and knowingly bear false witness, but persons can also be sincerely mistaken in their memories.

Many false memories of past sexual abuse appear to have been created in response to leading questions put by overeager therapists or aggressive lawyers. Subtle cues can be inadvertently conveyed and social reinforcements provided by interrogators operating with a biased set of expectations. But here too, therapists, interrogators, lawyers, or worried parents may be innocent of any conscious intent to produce false testimony.

Once you know about false memories and the unreliability of accounts, especially on the part of children, have you solved the problem of remembered sexual abuse? Is the current epidemic a modern replay of the Salem witchhunts? By no means. The new studies of complex human memory processes also reveal that persons can selectively forget actual events and only remember them later. Even the fact that the facts have been forgotten is also forgotten. When the cause of forgetting or amnesia is organic brain damage or disease, no recovery of memories is possible. But when the record of some past experience is dissociated or separated off from ongoing awareness—because of pain, fear, shock, stress, or an altered state of consciousness—then it may be possible to recover the memories. This phenomenon is called hypermnesia; over time a person can remember more and more of the past. Think of how we can gradually realize that we have read a book before and then remember the rest of the plot.)

A recovery may come about because certain cues are newly present, or a previous state of altered consciousness is reexperienced, or an effort is made to attend more carefully to heretofore unnoticed personal experiences. Since dissociated memories of sexual abuse can be recovered, long-belated accusations by victims may be true.

Where does this leave us when confronting a particular accusation of past sexual abuse, or for that matter, when any contradictory account of past events is being alleged and denied, as in the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings? One party may be consciously lying, or one or another party may also be in the throes of sincere self-deception, accessing their falsely reconstructed memories.

To resolve a specific dilemma we have to employ practical reasoning processes to the particular case. For my money no better method of applied reasoning exists than an approximation of the scientific method. You exercise doubt, test different hypotheses, control for your own biases, and examine the pattern of converging evidence—including baseline data and what isn't there. (As when Sherlock Holmes noticed that the dog didn't bark.) You collect information, work to uncover your own expectancies, and avoid jumping to conclusions.

Evidence comes in many forms. One reasonable approach to the probable truth of an allegation against a person is provided by the pattern of the accused person's life. After all, character is displayed by consistent habitual behavior, over time and across different situations. Good persons reveal themselves to be integrated, self-consciously mature, and self-controlled as they abide by their own moral standards of worth in all the situations of their lives. Weak, evil, mentally ill, or addicted persons continue to display disturbed patterns of behavior. Most sex abusers repeatedly victimize others.

Good persons are predictably moral and reliable. We trust them because over and over we have seen them act faithfully to fulfill their own high moral standards. When an accusation of serious moral failure is leveled against such a person it provokes sadness, or angry indignation on their behalf, but little doubt about their innocence.

Cardinal Bernardin's goodness and integrity of life give his testimony to the world. Granted, anything is possible, but not everything is equally probable. You may never obtain absolute certainty in any judgment, but you can achieve virtual certainty. I could as soon believe Bernardin guilty of sexual abuse as countenance the claim that Mother Teresa secretly tortures animals, or that the pope is plotting to restore communism to Poland. I predict that this particular crown of thorns and public scourging will not end in a public crucifixion.

Yet the sorrow and pity of sexual abuse among Christians remains. Innocent victims suffer and have their lives ruined; those falsely accused suffer and have their good name besmirched. □

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OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

WELL...A BABY?

There is something at the heart of Christianity that refuses abstraction. We take a baby, put him into water, and say that everything is different now: our relationship to the baby, his relationship to us, our responsibility before God. This action makes the baby one with Christ's life and death. The water itself is not an abstraction, but a sign of life and death, of quiet rain and raging flood, cleansing and drowning, the womb and the sailor's grave. Theology in the academic sense of the word always chases after this concreteness, generalizing about it, never completely adequately.

But the religious questions we encounter seem to demand abstractions, if only because this is the way we have grown used to talking about God. "What is God like? If you say God is loving, what does that mean? What is love?" Et cetera. I think it can be argued that no one was ever brought to God by good answers to these questions—though maybe relatively decent answers brought some people a bit closer. As important as it may be to offer (for example) decent courses of instruction to people who are interested in joining the church, it is probably more important to tell them to hang around for awhile, worshiping as much as it is possible for a nonmember to worship with the community, joining in the life of the church, making reading and instruction only part of the process—a part that may occasionally be illuminating but is hardly as important as watching baptism, celebrating eucharistically, seeing a wedding. This is risky, because when the potential church member meets the real community in its dailiness—all those quarrelsome, imperfect, and sometimes downright annoying people—she may decide that it is all pretty meaningless, and look elsewhere. But it seems right, because the reality of belief does exist at this level, and nowhere else. And if the reality does not exist at all, it is here that its nonexistence will become apparent.

I realize here that I am running up against the idea that the value of sacraments (for example) is not dependent on the worthiness of the minister, the ancient and important *ex opere operato* idea. It has to be remembered, though, that this argument arose in the context of questions of rebaptizing people who had been baptized by people who were not considered to have been faithful Christians, and had primarily to do with whether it was appropriate to consider such baptisms worthless—an important pastoral question, but not a *norm* by which the church should judge its performance. The major question regarding our fidelity on the Last Day will not be, "Were the sacraments validly administered?" The question will more likely be, "Were you faithful in such a way that anyone could tell?" Jesus asks Peter not for a discussion of what the Incarnation means; he asks, "Who do you say that I am?"

Here again we encounter something that opposes abstraction. In answer to the question, "What is God like?" the church answers by pointing to a specific person. This is it. "He who sees me, sees the Father." What is love? We are shown Christ crucified.

This is one reason that the not uncommon effort to abstract Jesus from the context of his times and culture is so problematic. He spoke of God (rather unusually) as Father, saw things in the light of a narrowly Jewish perspective, referred everything to that tradition—but, some would argue, he can in theory be thought of as someone who might equally have come from another kind of background, in another era, with other values...and perhaps we could have been redeemed another way....

It doesn't work. Incarnation is not only a challenge to abstraction of this sort, but a refutation of it. Love is someone nailed to wood and bleeding. You can talk about it, but a certain kind of talk avoids what happened. A Jewish male born into a society dominated by imperial Rome taught, healed the sick, preached forgiveness and love of enemies, and was killed by religious and political leaders who found everything about him threatening. His followers, among whom we are invited to count ourselves, say that God raised him from the dead, to show that the one Israel waited for had come. This is the only Messiah we will have. This is the truth about the world: the Lord of glory has been crucified. If you want to see what God is like, what love is like, this is where you have to look. If you find this hard to see, you have to look deeper.

And this is the message of Christmas. God's message to us in Christ begins with a young woman's willingness to accept him, and he comes among us not as a power, a force, but an absolutely dependent baby. The power God exercises to bring us to God's own life is not the power you would expect of one who (being in some way responsible for being itself, the Horsehead Nebula, the galaxies, light, gravity, thunder, lightning, cancer, plague) could terrify us into understanding that he is Lord. He confronts us as a baby whose being depended on a woman who said yes. He invites us to see him first as someone absolutely little. Any parent knows how heartbreaking this is, and how wonderful, if it is true.

If it is true...because it is hard to believe that God loves this way, and we are not compelled to believe it, but invited to believe it by someone who first reveals himself as a child. The Resurrection has no direct witnesses, and can't. This is a vision we are not yet capable of seeing. But there is something poignant almost beyond our being able to bear it in the vision of the God who created everything from nothing coming to us this way—now in a life shared with us as bread and wine, which we can take as food; in history, as a child whose dependence invites us to look at him the way God looks at us.

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GO AWAY!

WE'RE CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

JOHN WHITMAN

Christmas eve, 1949. My wife and I, two years married and she pregnant with our first child, had come back to Ohio after a year of graduate school at Stanford and were living for the moment in a Cleveland suburb with her family, her father and mother, an older brother and younger sister. We had already tried my family (my father and mother lived alone in a three-bedroom house in the city itself) but it hadn't worked out.

We were decorating the tree in the living room that Christmas Eve and carrying colorfully wrapped presents in from various upstairs closets to set beneath it. Before going to bed we would go through the ceremony I had learned in an earlier year of opening one present each, but saving the others until after breakfast on Christmas day. Swedish crystal heirloom ornaments, as well as less valuable paper cutouts of beasts and birds, were being carefully hung on the tree, while the windows upstairs and down on the front of the house were lit with electric candles. In a corner of the room carols were playing on the radio.

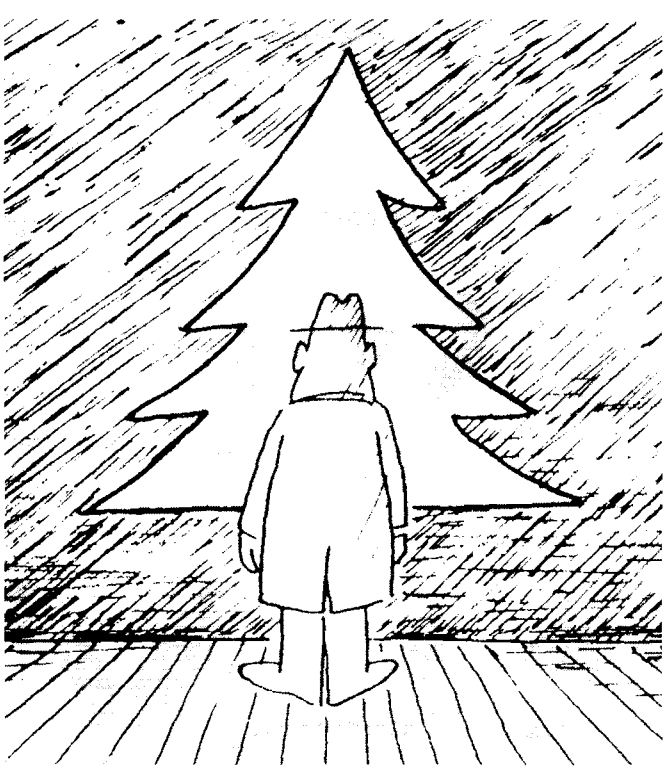
Brad, my wife's brother, had climbed a stepladder to place a shimmering gilt angel at the very top of the tree and to secure strings of lights that encircled the branches. Though relaxed, all of us were politely dressed up for the evening occasion. My wife and I would go to Mass in the morning. She had been in the church less than a year (she was baptized in California) and her conversion had never been quite accepted by her parents, nor had they easily welcomed me into their family. She had been sent to talk to a Presbyterian minister before our marriage, but she admitted it was not a denomination with which she was familiar. Her parents, as far as I knew, had never regularly gone to church. They had not planned to go on that Christmas day.

Outside it was snowing and had been for most of the afternoon, blowing in from the north. Between fast-moving clouds, a half-moon brightened the sky, and there were probably eight or nine inches of snow already on the ground. The air was filled with swirling silver flakes, catching light from the moon and from the windows.

"Somebody's coming!" Brad said suddenly from his perch above us on the ladder. "Look! Across the snow!"

The house sat far back from the highway, one of only several in a half-mile stretch cut out of woodland. The broad front yard was broken by a few irregularly spaced trees, a pair of old hickories, a tall, straight-boled walnut that had been spared, and several smaller trees that may have been hawthorns or hackberries. A replica rail fence gave slight protection from the highway. The nearest house, to the south, only recently built, was three cleared lots away.

Murmuring to each other, we moved to the front door and gathered in a group behind my wife's father, who had reached the door first, peering over each other's shoulders, and watched as the figure of a man came on through the snow from the distant northwest corner of the yard, leaving a visible track be-



JOHN WHITMAN *is the pseudonym of a free-lance writer.*

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hind him. When he reached the house, he came up two steps and stood beyond the full-length glass of storm door and the pane of the front door. Between the two doors a large wreath of balsam branches and pine cones hung, so that it partly obscured him. A slightly stooped figure, he wore a long, buttoned-up overcoat—its wide lapels reminded me of my own lately discarded Army overcoat—and a stocking cap pulled well over his ears. His coat and hat were covered with an inch of snow. I could not distinguish his face and realized that I could not tell, even, if he were white or "colored," as we used the term ther It was no night to be outside.

As if seeing a specter, my wife's father pressed his fac against the glass, turning his head this way and that, try ing to look beyond the wreath. Then, having reached a de cision, he stepped back, abruptly waving his arms, an shouted: "Go away! Can't you see we're celebrating Christ mas?"

Forty-four years ago. The older participants ar dead now, but the rest of us are alive. Although cannot speak for any of them (my wife and through the more than four decades have never mer tioned it to each other), that Christmas scene con tinues to haunt and perplex me.

I was the last to return to the living room and I watched a the man silently turned from the door and started out again throug the snow, plodding toward the far opposite corner of the yar completing a long "V" through the drifts. He had drawn hal of his return path to the highway, with the snow piling abou his ankles with each step, when my wife called to me, "Aren' you coming?" At just that moment the figure hesitated and turne toward the house, as if her voice had carried through the walls but then he went on.

I didn't answer but continued to watch the man's retreatin back until he had gained the road and disappeared. My wif joined me and I remarked, quarrelsomely I am sure, "What di your father say?"

"He said, 'Can't you see we're celebrating Christmas?' an we are, as much as possible. Don't make a scene. Come bac to the living room." Then she lowered her voice and admon ished: "You are still their guest."

I followed my wife into the living room and my mother-in law asked, "Are you all right?"

"I was thinking he was probably hungry," I said weakly, sit ting down, "and needed a place to get out of the cold."

"He shouldn't be out on a night like this, bothering people, my father-in-law said. "Doesn't he know it's a holiday?" Ther was a long, nervous silence among us as we fixed the last or naments on the tree and began cleaning up.

"He's just an old beggar," Brad said conclusively, crawlin on the floor behind the tree to test the lights.

We had coffee and tea, with ginger biscuits and other tra ditional Christmas cookies, before going up to bed. I took wit me as my prize a boxed set of records of Vivaldi's *The Fou Seasons*.When my wife had fallen asleep in the twin be against the inner wall of our room, which overlooked the wid lawn, I pulled the comforter loose from the foot of the bed be side the outer wall, took my pillow from the head of the bec placed it on the windowsill, and rested there, looking out a the night and the snow and the long tracks the man had made I unplugged the window light and placed it on the floor. Fo some time I was acutely aware of the wind and snow buffet ing the downspout at the corner of the house. I was strugglin against sleep. Who was he? Where had he come from Where had he gone? Cars occasionally passed on the high

Anne Porter

A Forest Pilgrimage

A winter storm has come up in the forest
And we're on pilgrimage
To the shrine of Our Lady of Woodcutters,
Built in the forest by the charcoal-burners
Who were living here two hundred years ago.

And here it is, Our Lady of Woodcutters,
A wooden chapel in a stand of pine.
Wind and sleet pour in as we open the door,
The flame that's burning in a ruby cup
Leaps like a wild thing trying to get free.
The freshness of the wilderness is here,
The little shrine is brimmed with solitude
Up to its gilded rafters.

And here is the icon that came from Novgorod,
All caked with pearls as an anchor is coated with barnacles
When it has lain in the sea for a long time.
In two places the pearls have been scraped away
Like frost from a window-pane,
To show us the olive-dark face of the Mother of God
And the wise dusky face of her infant Son.
From the crust of jewels they look at us with love.

We don't know how we're going to get home,
Our path on the satiny pine-needles of the forest floor
Lies hidden under the snow.
But looking into the eyes of the Mother of God,
Her somewhat sorrowful eyes,
All at once we notice, tiny against her throat,
The Child's lifted fingers blessing the whole world.

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way, plowing up rolls of snow, their lights shining blurredly through the night. Had he found food? Had he found a bed?

Within the house a clock ticked and I heard it strike midnight and the following half-hour mark, then one o'clock and later another half-hour, but I heard neither two nor three. Sometime during the night someone got up, perhaps my father-in-law, for their room was across the hall, and went downstairs, the steps creaking and cracking as each one was met. Five minutes or more later the footsteps returned. A door closed. When I awoke in the morning I was still at the window, with an ache in my neck and my face chilled. The snow had stopped, the wide expanse of the yard was clean. The tracks had been wiped away.

But I remember that during the night, as the snow was still falling, as I passed into and out of sleep, sometime after I had rearranged the down comforter to better cover myself, sometime after the moon had clouded over a final time, when cars no longer came by and the night had settled into infinite winter stillness, the unexplainable evening tableau began to unwind before me, as if it were a dream dissolving, when illusion and denial and wonder and disbelief and fragile piety were all at once overcome, I turned in the darkness to my wife and, alone and trembling with this revelation, said in what was meant to be a whisper but in my anxiety erupted in a loud voice, "I know who he is!"

But she was soundly asleep and didn't stir nor give a reply. The clock ticked, the downspout bothered the clapboards, no voice called out, no footsteps came running. I held my silence and my breath, huddled embarrassed on the bedcovers, then pulled myself into the comforter and soon, having reached that extravagant assumption, must have finally drifted off.

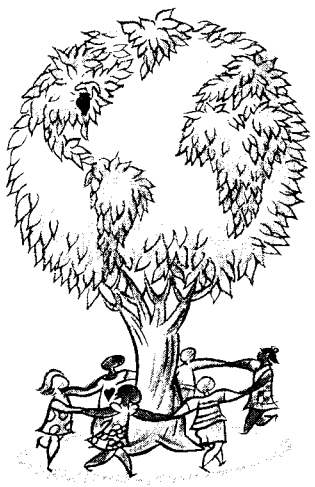
I was twenty-seven that year; now I am seventy-one.

In May 1944, five-and-one-half years earlier than that remembered Christmas season, I recall clearly and in detail that in the mountains below Rome, somewhere between Fondi and Roccasecca, a mule train supporting our battalion was destroyed and we were without supplies for a day-and-a-half. A peasant farmer and his child took it upon themselves to fill our empty canteens at a well not too far away but which was under German observation. All one afternoon, the canteens of dozens of soldiers were brought to the farmer and his son in the shadow of their house, and they carried them across the rocks and patiently under the enemy's view filled them from a pail lowered into the well and came back across the dangerous rocks to deliver them. I had collected eight or nine canteens among my platoon and took them to the point of exchange. While I waited for them to be returned, another child came up and proffered a wedge of cheese that he had under his shirt. "*Formàggio*?" he asked, and we sat side by side on the rocks as we consumed the better part of the cheese. By dusk the battalion had moved on, further into the mountains.

In the thirties, during the Depression, I remember my mother and other mothers on our street feeding men at their back doors, having them sit on the steps, making them a sandwich or stirring up a bowl of soup. Sometimes on Saturday, when I was not in school, I would peer at the shabby, tired men from behind the curtain of an upstairs window or hide in the garage and stare out. There would be "X" marks made in chalk on the garages and gates where a man could expect to get a meal or alternate signs where he would be refused.

Coming back from Communion on that Christmas morning in 1949, my mind was not where it should have been. I was waiting to recognize that overcoat. Only a man crazy or desperate would have been wandering that stretch of highway in the blowing snow of Christmas Eve. There were four houses in half a mile, no more than ten in a mile-and-a-half. There were no major crossroads, only slogging and cold and the danger of being run down in the dark. But I never found him, in that year or in others following. (I checked the newspapers to see if a vagrant had been killed, but there was no answer there.) But neither did I forget him. I approach each Christmas with a little sadness for him and for myself, that we came so close to meeting but never did. But he still lives, walking bent through the night, coming into the yard and going out again, requesting little, offering nothing, tramping that long "V" in the snow. □

Healing the Past . . .
CREATING THE FUTURE



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LAWLESS ROADS STILL

THE 'RED' BISHOP OF CHIAPAS

ALBERTO HUERTA

Less than a year ago, the name of a Catholic bishop—Don Samuel Ruiz García of San Cristóbal de las Casas, in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas—appeared on a hit list. The assassination plot, traced to a handful of landowners, was foiled by the bishop's supporters, committed like him to defending the human rights of the indigenous peoples who make up 80 percent of the diocese. They are proud descendants of the once powerful Maya civilization. Though the police were given the names of the conspirators, Don Samuel did not file charges. It was characteristic of him, as I later learned, that he forgave the perpetrators and did not wish to "embarrass" those involved. A co-worker, Sister Lucy Jimenez, who is responsible for more than 40,000 Guatemalan refugees housed in the many refugee camps in the diocese, smiled when she said, "Someone would be gunning down Don Samuel, and he would most likely apologize to the assassin for something or other. He is like that, always careful not to offend a person's dignity." At the same time, however, mindful of pastoral implications, the diocese let it be known that the attempt constituted grave sin.

Some members of Don Samuel's flock say he has received thirty or so death threats since he was consecrated bishop by Pope John XXIII at age thirty-five in 1960. When I pressed him on the matter he shrugged his shoulders: "They are exaggerations." But the assassination plot was genuine, and many believe that serious threats against the bishop are routine.

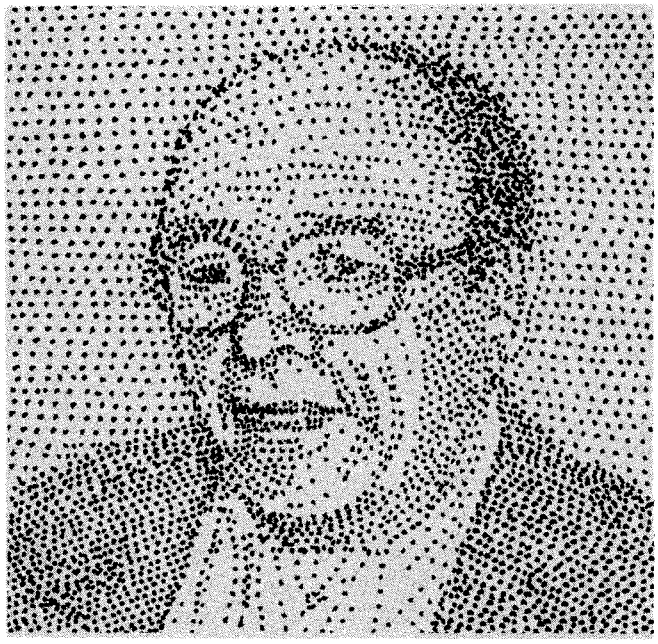
The bishop is less casual about labels pinned on him by elements of the local press and government calling him a "Communist" and a "Red." They are calumnies, he says, attempts to defame his character and undermine his option for the poor. But such name-calling, said the diocesan vicar general, the Reverend Gonzalo Ituarte, O.P., is expected. "Anyone who is concerned for the poor, and especially the indigenous peoples, is labeled a 'Red.' You have to get used to that idea, if you are going to work here."

Close associates of Don Samuel point out that, despite his easy dismissal of the threats, for years he has had a CB radio in his car (which he drives himself); they say the purpose is to keep the chancery informed of his whereabouts as a means of lessening the possibility of his being martyred like San Salvador' Oscar Romero, or of becoming *un desaparecido*. The bisho explains the matter more prosaically:

"Some years ago I realized that we work generally in the jun gle and that priests, religious, and catechists were very isolat ed from each other. So I thought that CB radios might help t break this isolation. I put it off, however, because I did not wan the government, or the local press, to say we were abetting an kind of guerrilla or insurgent groups, either from Guatemala o here in Chiapas. But now everyone has a CB, so I have encourage our priests and pastoral agents to install them in their cars an jeeps."

At sixty-nine, Don Samuel does not like to aggravate or sen sationalize the tense political and religious situations in his dio cese. But in the early 1980s, when Guatemalan-based helicopter harassed the refugee camps in Chiapas and Guatemalan sol diers crossed the border in search of political prisoners, he de manded that the Mexican government protect the refugees an grant them temporary asylum. Along with other Mexican bish ops, he helped promulgate the 1984 episcopal statement, "O the Situation of the Refugees."

Five years after Don Samuel became head of the once pow erful diocese of Chiapas, the Vatican divided it into three dio



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ceses. "I was the bishop of all Chiapas," he says. "When it was divided into three dioceses, that of Tuxtla Gutiérrez (the capital of the state) and Tapachula on the Pacific Coast, I was left landlocked between the two."

Bishop Ruiz García is a product of the Second Vatican Council, and his diocese reflects its spirit. With eighty-eight priests, many religious women and men, and committed lay workers, he has been generous in delegating authority among a vicar general with seven associates, a chancellor, pastoral agents, and teams of catechists. He recently commented on these teams with childlike enthusiasm: "We have 7,000 indigenous catechists—Ch'ols, Tzotzils, and Tzeltals—working in these communities. They themselves are the autochthonous church of hope that *Gaudium et spes* eloquently affirmed when referring to the poor and those who suffer."

Asked to elaborate, Don Samuel turned sober, even ponderous. "Beginning with Vatican II, the subsequent various bishops' conferences in Latin America, and the meeting in Santo Domingo last year with the pope, the church has recognized the particular spiritual richness inherent in the expression of faith found among the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Do not forget that it was the African bishops at the Second Vatican Council who demanded recognition for the cultural expression of their faith as a valid interpretation of Christianity. The church has found itself in the enviable position of fostering this discovery of a God incarnating himself daily in the lives of the poor and oppressed. The pope affirmed this special role of the church in his addresses recently in the Yucatan."

That outlook is hardly universal in Chiapas, where the wounds of the conquest still fester in memory. A colonial-era law in the city of San Cristóbal required an *indio* to step off the sidewalk into the street on encountering either a *ladino* (one of the original Spanish heirs of the conquest) or a *coleto* (a descendant of the conquerors). The law stayed on the books until the early 1980s.

Yet it is in the heirs of the Mayas that Don Samuel has invested his fullest confidence. Time and again, in ordination ceremonies, he has reiterated, "The indigenous people with whom you work will evangelize you, and not the other way round." His latest pastoral letter, "In this Hour of Grace," was issued in August to mark the visit of Pope John Paul II to Mexico's indigenous peoples.

Don Samuel's respect and concern for the *indios* extends beyond his own flock. I talked with four Tzotzils and Tzeltals—a Catholic, a Presbyterian, an Evangelical, and a freethinker. All spoke of the bishop with affection and with gratitude for his defense of their human rights. I asked Don Samuel whether he was concerned that his ecumenical spirit might lead to defections. "Interestingly," he said, "that is one area where there is general agreement. The Catholic church and the mainline Protestant denominations are discovering their option for the poor by working with them. We are not disturbed with other evangelical efforts, so long as they address the real needs of the people, who often are being deprived of their own lands and harassed indiscriminately by the landowners and the law enforcement authorities."

Don Samuel looked annoyed when I said I thought I was hearing echoes of liberation theology, a sometime target of criticism from the Vatican. "You are confusing two different things," he said. "We are not doing theology in the European sense where you move through a deductive process, going from the universal to the particular. We find ourselves with many pastoral particulars—the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, those who suffer injustice. The conquest was an imposition of faith, yet every day we see the Incarnation of Christ in the Americas.

"On judgment day we will not be asked about our theological speculation. We will be judged on what we did with those whom God entrusted to our care. Our concern is pastoral. If theologians put a label on what is done, that is speculation."

If the evangelical spirit of love and compassion in the diocese reflects Bishop Ruiz García's commitment to Vatican II, it is also something of a throwback to earlier times. The first bishop of Chiapas was the legendary Dominican Bartolome de las Casas, who came here in 1545, and whose presence still permeates like the dense fog that fills the valleys around San Cristóbal at night. Las Casas defended the *indios* against colonial oppression, not only in his well-known protests to the Spanish court but also on the scene—at times excommunicating *ladinos* and *coletos* who mistreated the indigenous people. I learned from an American working in Chiapas of a priest who followed in the Las Casas spirit when he refused the Eucharist to several wealthy women as they approached for Communion. The night before at a fiesta he had overheard them speaking about recruiting their Indian maids to initiate their sons in sexual adventure. Later he met with the indignant women privately to educate them in the church's respect for the *indio*. Such pastoral courage seems common in the diocese.

But life in Chiapas is hardly idyllic. When Graham Greene trekked here on a mule in the spring of 1938, he was investigating the state of Catholicism ten years after the blood bath of priests and nuns that resulted from the Mexican government's persecution of the church, an experience that gave birth to *The Lawless Roads* and *The Power and the Glory*. Greene also discovered an interesting syncretism of magic and dogma, and encountered an emotional depth of faith he had not previously known. At the same time he detected a Kafkaesque darkness in the continuing struggle between faith and ideology, which included the destruction of churches and the burning of statues in neighboring Villahermosa under the ruthless Garrido Canabal.

As late as September 1991, the conflict flared again when a pastor, Father Joel Padron of Simojovel, was arrested without a warrant and detained in the state capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez. The governor—Patrocino Gonzalez Garrido, a descendant of the infamous Garrido Canabal—had approved the arrest. The pastor was accused of inciting the *indios* to repossess land to which they claimed title. Immediately Don Samuel, his vicar

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general, and the diocesan human rights commission denounced the arrest as a flagrant act of oppression directed against the church. Finally, when more than 4,000 *indios* marched on Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Fr. Joel was released. In an irony Greene would have appreciated, the Salinas government then appointed Gonzalez Garrido minister of the interior, a post that endows him with considerable power over the Mexican police. Chiapanecos wait to see what vengeance the new minister may exercise against the church and the poor in San Cristóbal and elsewhere.

Don Samuel remains vigilant; the diocesan human rights commission carefully documents every instance of abuse. If that makes him a "Red," it is not because of ideology but because he follows in the long line of Catholics who have risked martyrdom in Mexico. It may be that Cardinal Juan Jesus Posadas Ocampo of Guadalajara, killed last May in a volley of bullets fired at close range, is the most recent. The event has nurtured a popular string of conspiracy theories implying complicity, hypocrisy, and corruption at very high levels. There are conflicting accounts of Posadas Ocampo's death. While the Vatican and Mexican authorities agreed that it was a matter of mistaken identity, a forensics expert stated on a Guadalajara newscast that the close range of the gunshots pointed to an assassination. Rebroadcast of the segment was later blacked out. Some believe the cardinal was killed because he planned to issue a pastoral letter condemning the growing Guadalajara-based narcotics industry.

Though Don Samuel may be spared a physical martyrdom, he and his diocese are suddenly experiencing a state of siege from a different quarter. On October 25, the Vatican's apostolic delegate to Mexico, Archbishop Girolamo Prigione—the man credited a year ago with reestablishing diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Mexico after a hiatus of sixty-five years—informed Don Samuel that the Congregation for Bishops was requesting his "retirement," a euphemism for his removal. Surprised and confused, the bishop asked the nuncio for an explanation, but Prigione refused to give particulars. Thinking the delicate matter an in-house affair to be resolved privately, Don Samuel decided to remain silent.

But the matter ceased to be private when Jesús Aranda of *La Jornada* (October 26) obtained and publicized a document from a meeting between the nuncio and a diocesan commission concerned about Don Samuel's future. Without spelling out particulars, the document stated that the Vatican was very concerned for Don Samuel's doctrinal and pastoral errors and his difficulties with the Mexican government that "went against the church and offended the Holy Father." When Prigione was challenged by the diocesan commission on these matters, the nuncio responded, "It is not about what Don Samuel says in his diocese, but about what he affirms in lectures and meetings, especially abroad." As an afterthought, the nuncio added that he did not know whether the Mexican government had requested Don Samuel's removal.

In an interview with Rodrigo Vero in *Proceso* (November 8), Prigione tried to vindicate his actions by saying he had only carried out the Vatican's request: "I limited myself to forwarding to Don Samuel the letter that the pope has sent him through the Congregation of Bishops. The rest is not my affair." Bishop Reynoso Cervantes of Cuernavaca, spokesman for the Mexican Bishops' Conference, corroborated Prigione's account. "Prigione ended his vacation in Italy in October and stopped by Rome....It was there he was given the letter requesting Bishop Ruiz García's retirement. At first Prigione did not wish to carry out this disagreeable mission, but was told that Pope John Paul II had already approved the document. He was ordered by Cardinal Bernardin Gantin to personally give Don Samuel the letter. When Prigione arrived in Mexico, he had to call Don Samuel in Brazil, where he was attending a meeting in São Paulo....Prigione had nothing to do with the Vatican's decision to remove Bishop Ruiz García."

A source close to Don Samuel, who wished to remain anonymous, told me that "for some time now, people in important positions in Mexico and Rome have wanted [Don Samuel] and his diocese to rectify and change their positions favoring the poor, the indigenous peoples, and the refugees. They have wanted to put on notice those who think as Don Samuel does. This action by Rome seems to be their way [of doing this]."

And what will Don Samuel do now? He is still waiting to hear what the alleged charges are all about, but he has decided to conduct a self-evaluation in his diocese with the leaders and the faithful before deciding whether or not to resign. Reaction in Mexico and elsewhere has not been muted. The Mexican hierarchy is divided over the matter, and civil rights activists, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberto Menchu, have publicly protested the Vatican's action. Still others in Mexico speculate that Rome's decision had less to do with doctrinal matters than with threats to Don Samuel's life. But without Rome's apparent support, Don Samuel will need more than a CB radio in his car to prevent him from one day joining the long and growing line of Mexican Catholic martyrs. □

SCREEN

STUNTS
'REMAINS' & 'CARLITO'S WAY'

Mary McCarthy once wrote that some of the best novelists of her time used first-person narration in such a way that their books became "impersonations, ventriloquial acts the author, like some prankster on the telephone, is speaking in an assumed voice—high or deep, hollow or falsetto, but in any case not his own...[the reader] senses the author, cramped inside the character like a contortionist in

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box and suspects (often rightly) some trick."

Likewise, *The Remains of the Day*. In this Booker Prize winner, Kazuo Ishiguro (born in Nagasaki but resident in England since the age of six) has imagined himself into the skin of a butler who defines himself, *sees* himself, strictly in terms of the service he renders his employer, Lord Darlington. Stevens rates "dignity" as the ability of members of his profession "to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming, or vexing...he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone." But, in fact, Stevens can't discard his imperturbability even when he is alone. The professional mask has become a face, a face that can't express emotion or alter in response to the passion of other people.

As Stevens motors from Darlington Hall in Oxfordshire to the west country in order to visit Miss Kenton, the Hall's former housekeeper, he reflects upon his life of service. His interior monologue is the substance of the book and it is couched in a language that demands the reader's mistrust. If Stevens tells you that his employer was a perfect nobleman, then you know that Lord Darlington will turn out to be an incipient Fascist. If Stevens tells you that his feelings for Miss Kenton were entirely professional, then you must suspect suppressed sexual longings. If Stevens says white, then you must think black. There is an obvious drawback to this method: the novel becomes almost as predictable as its hero. It's a stunt and you soon learn the mechanics of the stunt. But it's a stunt with a humanistic purpose: cramped inside Stevens's bland monologue is Kazuo Ishiguro mischievously indicting Stevens—and through Stevens anyone who fails to live his own life.

The James Ivory-Ruth Prawer Jhabvala film adaptation is not a stunt, just a good movie. There are three reasons why this is so:

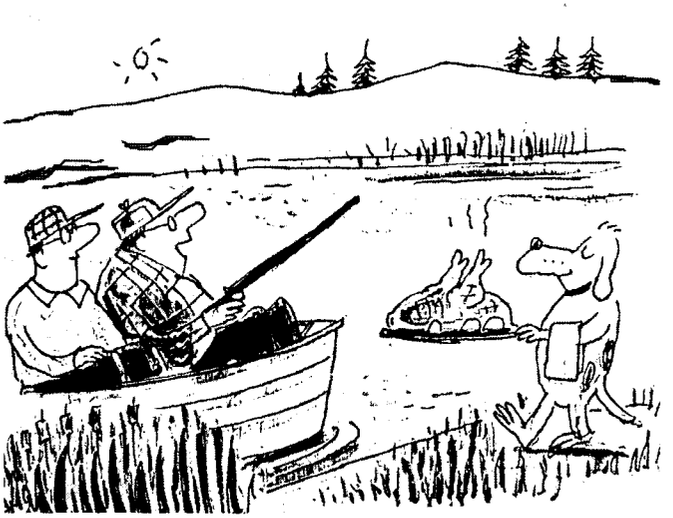
First, watching the movie you don't follow the story through the veil of Stevens's language. Every character inhabits the same plane of cinematic reality. For instance, in the movie version of the scene in which Miss Kenton invades the butler's pantry and demands to see the book he is reading, you needn't decode Stevens's deliberately stilted description of what is going on in order to discover that this is a moment of sexual incursion by an attractive woman which falters against a man's emotional armor. The underwater lighting by Tony Pierce-Roberts, Ivory's artfully cramped composition, Emma Thompson's pensive yet aggressive tone of voice, and Anthony Hopkins's bemused facial expression, immediately transmit what's happening.

Second, while the book's narrative skips back and forth in time according to the fluctuations of Stevens's memory, Mrs. Jhabvala has made the film story linear. The reader has to piece together the plot, but the scriptwriter unfolds it with easy assurance as a straightforward flashback beginning with Miss Kenton's arrival at Darlington Hall and ending with her departure; then the present-tense reunion of the two servants gives us a tristful coda. This adaptation would ruin, say, Proust, whose meaning emerges from the back-and-forth hunt through time, but it does no harm to Ishiguro, whose theme is the denial of reality, not its excavation.

Third, and most decisively, Anthony Hopkins. While Ishiguro presents us with a man trying to turn himself into a robot and being damn near successful at it, the actor portrays a Stevens less rigid than melancholy, not utterly dehumanized by his professionalism but clinging like a drowning man to the spars of his duty. Reading the novel, I couldn't understand why Miss Kenton was attracted to Stevens, but Hopkins, whose speciality is fierce emotion unsuccessfully suppressed, shows why. This man puts his feelings on a leash but can't bring them to heel. (Some women find this inner struggle attractive.) There is a moment when a young aristocrat toward whom Stevens has avuncular feelings wishes the butler a cheerful farewell. Hopkins, caught off guard, raises his hand to wave back, then quickly pulls it to his side. That's typical of the man. Stevens in the book won't admit what he's feeling even to himself; the movie Stevens knows perfectly well what he's feeling but also knows that he's not equal to it.

At the end of the novel, Stevens is still reverting to servile form and the concluding paragraph is the author's joke at the character's expense. At the end of the movie, Stevens, with dignity and self-knowledge, resigns himself to the sterility of his declining years, and we don't dare laugh at him The stoic poignancy of the title, *The Remains of the Day*, is more fully earned by the movie than by the book.

Imagine this. You find yourself outside a circus tent and in conversation with an acrobat who is going to perform his act in a few minutes. From time to time, he does deep kneebends and a few other warm-ups yet seems curiously eager to shoot the breeze with you. Alas, the fellow is as banal as he is loquacious. He covers every topic with clichés. Finally, he gets his call and enters the tent



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COMMONWEAL FOR CHRISTMAS

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to perform. Almost paralyzed with boredom, you can barely bring yourself to tug aside the canvas flap and look toward the circus ring.

Lo! The acrobat has abolished gravity. He certainly has abolished *your* gravity as you watch him trace curlicues in the air, execute quadruple somersaults and...God knows what that last stunt is called in acrobat's jargon! How did you think of this performer a moment ago? Banal? Up in the air, he's the most astonishing man on the face of the earth.

Let my little anecdote serve as my verdict on *Carlito's Way*. Most of this movie is just a repackaging of the story that Warner Brothers gangster movies told again and again in the thirties and early forties: a mobster (then James Cagney, now Al Pacino in a Puerto Rican variant) elects to go straight and is hassled both by the law and his former cohorts. His inamorata (Joan Blondell then, Penelope Ann Miller now) urges him along the straight-and-narrow but a treacherous chum (Sean Penn, who's quite vivid in a creepy-comic mode) sells him out. Our hero goes down in a spray of bullets but only after taking his Judas and quite a few other mugs down with him.

The masterpiece of this genre is still *The Roaring Twenties* because Raoul Walsh's direction is a kinetic treat, serving up a ballet of screeching, swerving cars and crumpling bodies. But this new film's scriptwriter, David Koepp, and director, Brian De Palma, are like my loquacious acrobat. Apparently, they have convinced themselves that they aren't mere crowd-wowers but serious artists offering a powerful character study with fresh sociological sidelights. So Al Pacino, as Carlo Brigante, spends a lot of screen time pondering the degeneracy of the new generation of criminals or—the gangster as Hamlet—wondering if he has really reformed or just "run out of wind." Much of Penelope Ann Miller's role consists of shrilling at Pacino for his recklessness at trusting Penn or bestowing wistful side glances at baby-hugging moms who have heeded their biological clocks.

Of course, all this "human interest" stuff is meant to give the conventional gangster narrative weight, and it most certainly does—the weight of cement shoes on a corpse. But, like my acrobat, De Palma keeps warming up by staging the bursts of action he can do well: assassination attempts, a pistol whipping, a striptease. And in the last twenty minutes, the acrobat finally gets up on his trapeze and really flies. De Palma unleashes all his virtuosity on a wonderfully inventive chase sequence that has Pacino fleeing mobsters first on a subway and then all over Grand Central Station. Never has he better used a public place as a sort of concrete forest (pillars as trees, escalators as waterfalls), never has his choreography of violence been niftier, nor has his camera ever glided through the action with more angelic—or devilish?—ease.

De Palma doesn't do humanism. He does stunts. I hope the overearnestness of so much of *Carlito's Way* isn't a forecast of reformation. Some hoods shouldn't go straight. Ask Carlito.

RICHARD ALLEVA

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In the beginning came the words

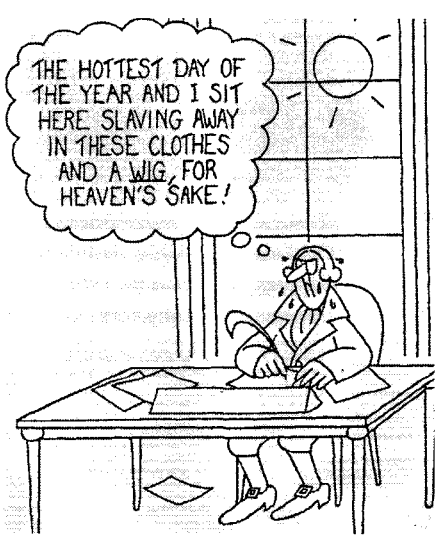
THE DEBATE ON THE CONSTITUTION
Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches, Articles, and Letters During the Struggle over Ratification
Edited by Bernard Bailyn
The Library of America, 2 volumes, each $35, 1,214 and 1,175 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

The ratification of the United States Constitution was the result of a remarkably civil tumult, the occasion for grand argument and great politics. Interests and pragmatic calculations, as always, shaped much of the conflict—most obviously, in the framers' accommodation with slavery, that violation of natural rights—but the participants also knew they were playing on a bigger stage, arguing over futures and redefining the very terms of political speech. They saw, with tolerable clarity, the possibilities and limitations of public life under the Constitution and their disputes shadow our present discontents.

Both the Federalist champions of the Constitution and their Antifederalist opponents saw themselves as advocates of republican, broadly democratic government. But where Federalists considered that the requirements of republican consent are satisfied if citizens have a vote, Antifederalists insisted that they have a voice. The Antifederalists began with the proposition that republican liberty requires a public freely obedient to the laws it makes: self-government includes the government of the self, the subordination of private interests and inclinations to the rule of law and the common good. Since the stronger the assent, the more perfect the republicanism of a regime, republican policy aims "to arm persuasion on every side and to render force as little necessary as possible," a goal which points toward a politics rooted in small, deliberative communities. The larger and more diverse a regime, Antifederalists reasoned, the more distant and impersonal its government, the more fractional the say enjoyed by any citizen, and the feebler the sense of civic obligation or public spirit. Accordingly, Antifederalists predicted that government under the Constitution would depend more and more on enforcement and on the essentially covert politics of administration, part of a system "too mysterious for you to understand and observe."

By contrast, the more familiar case of the Federalists maintained that republics—like all political societies—exist to protect the liberty and enhance the power of individuals. Consequently, Federalists held that a large state is to be preferred for its greater diversity and resources, and because it frees individuals *from* small political societies—"nurseries of unceasing discord," at best, and at worst, subject to the tyranny of some local faction. Moreover, as Madison observed, the fragmentary influence of any single group in a large republic means that majorities must be the creations of coalition and compromise. Reducing the possibility of oppression, the mediocrity of such politics encourages limited and short-term political commitments, and develops citizens who are "circumspect," the wary guardians of their private rights and interests.



Looking at the big picture, both sides were on target. So here we are, wrestling with the old dilemmas.

Some collections of Antifederalist writings have recently become generally available, but for the most part, Americans have heard the ratification controversy only through *The Federalist*, if at all. *The Debate on the Constitution*, an extensive collection of primary sources selected by Bernard Bailyn, offers a more full-throated version of the argument, including important supporters of the Constitution—like James Wilson, John Stevens ("Americanus"), and Noah Webster—who are often ignored in favor of *The Federalist*, as well as a wide range of voices on the Antifederalist side. The announced aim of *The Debate on the Constitution* is to present the Founders in an "embattled journalistic context," up to their armpits in *praxis*, so while the order of the selections is basically chronological, Bailyn often departs from that arrangement to sharpen the exchanges or to clarify a position. All in all, these volumes capture a good deal of the clamor and confusion of politics, and the fervor of a contest for titanic stakes.

Still, there is a caveat: the selections from *The Federalist* are presented in a strictly chronological relation to other writings, sometimes in a way that almost willfully fragments their argument. For example, *The Federalist* No. 9, printed November 21, 1787, emphasizes the Union as a barrier against "faction and insurrection," and is obviously closely tied to Madison's well-known treatment of the problem of

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faction in *The Federalist* No. 10, which appeared a day later, on November 22. In *The Debate on the Constitution*, however, the two essays are separated from each other by George Mason's "Objections," (grouped together with a long list of replies) and by an unrelated essay of "Cato," both of which were also printed on November 22. Even in a rigidly chronological scheme, these selections could have been printed after *The Federalist* No. 10, since all three essays appeared on the same day. The effect of Bailyn's ordering is to separate *The Federalist* No. 9 from its sequel by fifty-nine pages. (And by a similar contrivance, sixty-six pages intervene between *The Federalist* No. 62, on the Senate, and the crucial continuation of the argument in No. 63.)

Elsewhere, in *Faces of the Revolution*, Bailyn has argued that *The Federalist* was less important in the politics of ratification than Americans have been taught to believe. This is a sensible corrective, but Bailyn's editing seems a little too eager to reinforce the point, since even on a generous reading, the text of *The Federalist* is in danger of being lost amid so much context. Bailyn's position tempts him to slight the fact that *The Federalist* towers and endures, as George Washington predicted and hoped it would, because, while a tract for the times, it was also self-consciously something more. Like the best statements on both sides of the ratification debate, *The Federalist* speaks to the theoretical foundations of the laws, telling us something fundamental about ourselves. It is the virtue of *The Debate on the Constitution*, other quarrels aside, that it provides us with so much of that indispensable civic curriculum. □

A POET'S POET

THE HIDDEN LAW
The Poetry of W.H. Auden
Anthony Hecht
Harvard University Press, $35, 488 pp.

Daria Donnelly

The Hidden Law is a fascinating study of W. H. Auden, not simply because Anthony Hecht interprets Auden's poetry with enormous intelligence and attention, but also because his temperament is at odds with his subject. Those who have read "Behold the Lilies of the Field" or "The Deodand" know Hecht as a poet of exacting diction and vision, who relentlessly keeps human brutality and pain in view. Auden's poetry also gives sustained attention to the confusions of "The Age of Anxiety" (the title of his famous "baroque eclogue," a portion of which first appeared in this magazine) and to the hideous carnage erupting from what he called, in his poem "September 1, 1939," "a low dishonest decade." But unlike Hecht, Auden's vision is tempered by his anxiety-ridden desire for safety and domesticity, as in "A Walk after Dark," a late poem contemplating death:

> It's cosier thinking of night
> As more an Old People's Home
> Than a shed for a faultless machine,
> That the red pre-Cambrian light
> Is gone like Imperial Rome
> Or myself at seventeen.

In his affectionate memoir of Auden, Oliver Sacks speaks of the deep association of the word "cosy" with the English poet: "The first time I had tea with him—back in 1969—I found the teapot in a tea-cosy, and my egg in an egg-cosy"; after tea, Auden, seeing the jacketed tank of Sacks's motorcycle declared, "I like that, it shows you care for the bike. I have never seen a bike with a bike-cosy before. But it's absolutely right."

Hecht does not share this vocation to hominess, and part of his book's rewards stem from the dissonance between the poets. Hecht's own poetry is more overtly indebted to the ravaging power of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound. Yet Hecht admires Auden more, because where the modernists' nostalgic desire for order drove them to various mythologies and ideologies, Auden stayed with the age, taking up and partially abandoning each of several ways of ordering human experience, including Marxism, Freudianism, and Anglican Christianity. Hecht is immensely sympathetic to the seriousness of Auden's intellectual and emotional commitments and the skepticism that kept him searching. Hecht gives special attention to Auden's spirituality, and rejects, as prejudices against religion, the common critical judgment that Auden's early work is superior to all that followed, and that the poet descended from political engagement into quietism. Arguing for the quality of the religiously engaged poetry, Hecht gives three chapters to "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio" (1944), "Nones" (1951), and "The Shield of Achilles" (1955).

As an irritable and demanding admirer, Hecht does not shirk from pointing out where Auden is too tough or too easy on himself and his poetry. He sets these judgments in counterpoint to Auden's equally scrupulous but different sense of his failures. The common ground between the poets, which *The Hidden Law* slowly reveals, is distilled in a fragment from Hecht's poem, "Peripeteia":

> I stood in childhood, waiting for
> things to mend.
> A useful discipline, perhaps. One
> that might lead
> To solitary, self-denying work
> That issues in something harmless,
> like a poem,
> Governed by laws that stand for
> other laws,
> Both of which aim, through kindred
> disciplines,
> At the soul's knowledge and
> habiliment.

Both poets are deeply attracted to the discipline of self-denial, the laws of form, and the idea of anonymous heroism, all of which are related to their more central commitment to creating a "harmless" poetry. The strongest reflections in *The Hidden Law* concern Auden's widely misunderstood view of poetry as "frivolous," which come in expected places such as during an extended commentary on "In Memory o

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W. B. Yeats" and its famous line, "For poetry makes nothing happen," as well as in completely unexpected places such as the chapter on "For the Time Being." There, Hecht mounts a full-scale attack on T.S. Eliot's view, professed in his essay on Baudelaire's Satanism, that "it is better to do evil...than to do nothing." Against this stance the critic pits his own (and implicitly, Auden's) richer understanding of "nothing," and the more ethical struggle to be and produce something "harmless." Hecht writes, "For I find it always requires active moral energy simply to keep from doing harm to others even inadvertently, and that, in view of the ever present inequities in human life, we can never be unaware of the unmerited suffering around us which we cannot hope ever to fully repair." Reading this book you feel the enormous debt Hecht owes to the clearsighted and modest claims for poetry with which Auden blessed the generation of poets who came of age during World War II.

The Hidden Law draws a very strong line between poetry and prose. The reader of Hecht's poetry will recognize his precision but will need a moment to adjust to the willfully prosaic style. The thematic exposition of the book is tacit rather than explicit. In order to get a better orientation, begin with the final chapter where Hecht reveals his intention to write a book "without any prior agenda": "I determined to address myself to those poems, collections, essays, plays, or fragments of Auden's recorded conversations that particularly delighted, interested, or (sometimes) provoked me, but especially those works that inspired admiration or seemed to demand comment and elucidation." In accord with this scheme, each chapter is centered on a single volume of poetry and involves close readings of individual poems. Transitions between poems are abrupt. Not until the final chapter are thematic patterns arising from a close reading of the poems explicitly discussed, such as Auden's effort to integrate the polarities of public and private life, and his conviction that frivolity is the foundation of an ethical poetry.

The structure of *The Hidden Law* is deliberately provocative. Hecht, who teaches at Georgetown University, wants to outrage colleagues who inflate their importance by studying ever smaller portions of a poet's life and work or who have critical preoccupations to which a "poet and his work are tortured into conformity." One only hopes that his concluding salvos and the structural aggressiveness of this book do not signal Hecht's straying into the abyss of the current culture wars. We need his rigorous and attentive interpretation too much. □

A SWING & A MISS

LOOKING BACKWARD
A Critical Appraisal of
Communitarian Thought
Derek L. Phillips
Princeton University Press, $29.95, 248 pp.

William M. Sullivan

For writers, the appeal of polemic over critique is obvious. While critique demands that one present the best arguments of the work in question in order to show its limits, the genre of polemic has few rules of fair play. The danger is that the polemicist will allow indignation to distort perception into caricature and then seriously try to dismantle a straw figure. Despite some useful observations along the way, in *Looking Backward: A Critical Appraisal of Communitarian Thought*, Derek L. Phillips proceeds to do just that.

Phillips's strategy is to take the loose usage of "communitarian" as a label for a variety of current writers on social and political issues, and try to find in that label a conceptual core centered on the notion of "community." The writers principally considered—Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and the authors of *Habits of the Heart* (of which the reviewer is one)—are by "considerable agreement" judged to be "the major communitarian thinkers." All are found to be not only "highly critical of political individualism and liberalism" but also "emphasize very similar features in characterizing social groups as communities."

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Phillips proceeds to "uncover the communitarian ideal," asserting that it continues the critique of modern society put forward in the nineteenth century by thinkers nostalgic for a lost premodern world. Thus, for Phillips, whatever particular authors say, "community" must mean common territory, common history and values, a widespread participation in common activities, and a high degree of solidarity, especially as expressed in emotional attachments springing from ascribed rather than achieved status. This, of course, is that staple of introductory sociology texts, Ferdinand Tonnies's contrast between the lost warmth of *Gemeinschaft* and the chilliness of modern *Gesellschaft*. But Phillips claims that what "communitarians" have in common is the effort to restate this old dichotomy to the detriment of right-thinking liberal minds.

Phillips wants to debunk this nostalgic idealization of the past by showing that the good old days weren't nearly so rosy. "The bulk of this book, then, represents a sort of sociology of the past," he writes. Two chapters on early America follow, then two on the Middle Ages, finally one on ancient Athens, plus instructions on "Learning from History." These tutorials are neither startling nor particularly gripping in their recitation of the oppressions and violence of the allegedly more "communal" societies of the past. The patient reader will find more to ponder in the concluding chapter, "A Liberal Reply to Communitarian Thought." There Phillips tries to stage a head-to-head confrontation between the approaches of the "communitarians" and those of a variety of philosophical liberals.

The central issue here turns out to be that while liberals want to exalt the freedom, dignity, and self-determination of persons, communitarians "and their nineteenth-century counterparts emphasize the primacy of the collective life over the individual." Phillips at one point claims that these alleged differences stem from different views of the self, in which communitarians stress the "emergent" and unchosen features of identity which result from the contingencies of birth and history, while liberals want to emphasize "self-creation" and play down the ways in which selves are "products of our social relations."

This line of thinking, however, hardly advances Phillips's efforts to clarify the contemporary scene. Put in his terms, self-avowed "bourgeois liberals" who stress the contingency of thought and identity, such as Richard Rorty, must be classified as "communitarian." And so it goes. Finally, though, we get to a strong, if not entirely clear, statement of the book's thesis. Phillips asserts that while "social ties, attachments, and fellow feeling" are necessary for human well-being, they need not entail "relatedness in terms of the group or collective," nor find their source in "the community." What counts, we are told, is not "membership" or participation but "attachment."

Here, labels such as "communitarian" aside, the significance of the arguments surrounding the authors Phillips criticizes begins to appear. What is missing from Phillips's thin theory of "attachments" is the recognition that the goods he most praises, such as individual agency, dignity, and critical inquiry, cannot be sustained over time apart from ongoing patterns of collective action and practice That is, liberal values, like all human goods, depend upon a complex social network of practices and institutions.

The argument Phillips misses is the claim that the survival of liberal goods is threatened by public and theoretical languages, not to say social developments which ignore or run down those sustaining social and moral contexts and curtail discussion of them. Part of the history which counts here is trying to understand how such a fundamental recognition could have been eclipsed in much modern thought and action. Something like this and not nostalgic appeals for *Gemeinschaft* is closer to the core of the criticisms of liberal individualism, atomism, and abstraction found in MacIntyre, Taylor, and others. Unfortunately misled by the effort to find some essence of "communitarianism," Derek Phillips never identifies his authors' major themes clearly enough to subject them to critique.

PASSION LYRICS

THE LAND WHERE THE BLUES BEGAN
Alan Lomax
Pantheon, $25, 540 pp.

Jason Berry

Alan Lomax, now nearly eighty years old, is a legendary figure in the annals of American popular music. As an historian and collector of songs, his career spans the era in which blues music rose from remote Southern hollows to an internationally commercial art form. Various scholars have chronicled the idiom. In his many books, articles, and films Alan Lomax has left a singular mark on that history: his poetic voice, driven by a passion for the musician's struggle, radiates on every page he writes.

With a muckraker's zeal, he began traveling rural backroads during the Depression with his father, John, whose folk music writings set a high standard. Together they recorded songs and life-tales of singers—even men in prison. More than a memoir *The Land Where the Blues Began* recounts Lomax's journeys over the last half-century. Shifting back and forth in time, it is sharpened by historical insights and reflections of the heart. Of prisons, he writes "Despite the guards, who sat by during all the recording sessions, despite our own pale faces, which must have seemed like masks of indifference to so many of them, the convicts filled our records with a thousand moving songs, an epic of hot sun and brutality and human courage, mounted upon sincere and profound melodies."

Part of Lomax's influence on writers who cover music is his insistence on treating the lyrics, rhythms, and body language of dance steps as a cultural vocabulary, a coded way of embracing life among those

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on the bottom of society. The new book sees blues through the prism of a culture resisting forms of racial domination that today may seem archaic.

The story opens in 1942 in Delta plantation country as the author, eluding thuggish deputy sheriffs, locates the mother of Robert Johnson, whose haunted lyrics echoed the tragedy of his early death—poisoned (presumably) in a lovers' quarrel. From the grieving mother's shack, Lomax moves on to find Son House, who had been a mentor to Johnson.

Lomax's concept of the blues provides a counterweight, of sorts, to ideas about the splintering of black families. "Orphaned by their society," he writes, "the itinerant Delta bluesmen created songs that appealed to women for sympathy and a place to hang their hats....[I]t was the degree to which each bluesman experienced the sense of pain and loss that accompanies the disappearance of parents, which determined the way they sang the blues. Those bluesmen who grew up in solid families or were left to the care of beneficent grandparents or other caring relatives seem less agonized, at least to my ear." Such comments tie the narrative together with illuminating threads and extend the psychological terrain of the music.

Important new cultural dynamics emerged after the early-century black migrations to the urban North. "Constant fear and humiliation had disappeared from their lives," Lomax writes. "[W]hen the folks went out on the town, such a hilarious, wild, moody, and eccentric sound arose in the gin mills and dance halls on the South Side—such a wailing of clarinets, such a braying of trombones, such a singing of trumpets, such a river of rhythm from pianos, guitars, and drums...burst out."

"Fact is, Mr. Tubshaw, lots and lots of people don't have rhythm."

Some will take exception to Lomax's labeling Chicago "the capital city of jazz and blues," given the predominant role of New York as the commercial arena, and of New Orleans as the wellspring of jazz and rhythm-and-blues. But critical caveats are inevitable with a book of such sweep.

The author occasionally fails to meet his own exacting standards, as when he passes on the story of Bessie Smith, dying after an automobile accident in Mississippi because no white hospital would admit her—a tale that Chris Albertson disputed convincingly in his major biography of the great blues singer.

Lomax's last chapter is a bittersweet reflection of how far the nation has come in embracing African-American artistry. In New York he conducts a long interview with Big Bill Broonzy, Memphis Slim, and Sonny Boy Williamson. When he plays back the recording they make him promise not to reveal their names. "It didn't matter that the three of them lived in Chicago," he writes. "When those Deep Delta peckerwoods heard the records, they'd come looking for them. If they couldn't find them, they'd go after their *families*, burn down their houses."

"This was America in 1948," writes Lomax. "I kept my promise until 1990"—by which time the three men were dead. The world of media lights and recording contracts has moved closer to the blues. Yet the land where the blues began, the deep Delta counties of Mississippi, is still economically grim for most blacks, and ravaged now by drugs and drive-by shootings. Rap music is the voice of the new generation, an idiom whose coarsest manifestations celebrate violence and degradation of women. Lomax devotes less than two pages to rap, and those are largely taken up with a structural analysis of the idiom.

Lomax approaches music in much the way Theodore White covered politics—as a romantic. The rise of early jazz and blues, even midcentury rhythm-and-blues, fits that thematic embrace. Today's harsher pop idioms can be traced back in certain ways to the older forms. But an imagination of violence permeates the postmodern psyche and its nihilism seems to betray the more soulful message of yesteryear's great passion lyrics. □

REVIEWERS

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

pecially for your editorial comments.

Ever since he began speaking and writing as bishop of Rome, John Paul II has given me the impression that he is a Lutheran in his theology. *Veritatis splendor* seems to support that reading. It is interesting that of your commentators the most pro-encyclical is a Protestant theologian with a seemingly Barthian bent.

FRANK C. ARRICALE

Smith was too timid

Bronxville, N.Y.

To the Editors: I was disappointed in Janet Smith's response [October 22] to John Paul II's *Veritatis splendor*. Its tone seemed absolutist, and yet, for her, timid and somewhat obscure. This from a woman who has dared articulate the most thoughtful and daring moral explication of *Humanae vitae* since it was issued twenty-five years ago. To have supported this encyclical from within the academy (Catholic and secular) has been more courageous than the Reverend Charles Curran could ever imagine.

Consider the following from a recent article she published in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* [April 1993] on the connection between contraception and abortion:

> The connection between contraception and abortion is primarily this: contraception facilitates the kind of relationships and even the kind of attitudes and moral characters that are likely to lead to abortion. The contraceptive mentality treats sexual intercourse as though it had little natural connection with babies; it thinks of babies as an "accident" of intercourse, as an unwelcome intrusion into a sexual relationship, as a burden. The sexual revolution has no fondness—no room—for the connection between sexual intercourse and babies. The sexual revolution simply was not possible until reliable contraceptives were available.

Long before *Veritatis splendor*, Smith

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ıas emphasized the use and misuse of the vord freedom. She stresses that the true reedom we all desire is to be able to pur- ue what is good and true, not a freedom hat closely resembles license—the free- lom to do whatever one wants, regard- ess of what is good and true. Thus when ›ersonal desire, or license, substitutes for reedom, it really means, in Smith's vords, "not to discover what is good and rue, but to be free to define what is good nd true."

Janet Smith offers an intellectual map o allow the thoughtful (and fearless) Catholic to begin to consider the possi- ›le link between artificial contraception nd abortion. From my own position with- n the Episcopal church, there is no such nap.

ANN ENGLISH

Phony academic freedom

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: Your symposium on the ›roposed ordinances concerning Catholic olleges [November 19] reveals the con- radiction at the heart of contemporary Catholic education. In the name of free- lom, your authors criticize episcopal in- ervention in the internal governance of he colleges. However, they appear to everence the growing interference of the tate, accrediting agencies, and profes- ional organizations in the policies of the olleges.

The lament of Charles Curran is typ- cal. He condemns the ordinances as a iolation of academic freedom: "Eccles- astical authorities outside the academic nstitution make decisions which deter- nine who is hired and who is dismissed rom a college faculty." However, he de- ers to the power of the American Association of University Professors AAUP], a professional organization vhich censures schools that deviate from ts increasingly secularist concept of aca- lemic freedom. He warns of the dangers f the colleges dare to cross the AAUP: First, the ordinances will at least cast a ong and dark shadow over the enterprise f Catholic higher education. Two, any nstitution in which ecclesiastical action s taken against a theologian will lose redibility in the eyes of the academic ommunity." Similarly, he argues that the state rightly sets the standard for academic freedom for these colleges: "Catholic educators seriously fear the loss of state and federal funding if they do not have full academic freedom....The fear of los- ing such funding, with its threat to their very existence, strongly influenced Catholic colleges to accept academic freedom in the late 1960s." Why the state and the AAUP enjoy such singular power over Catholic colleges—while the Catholic bishops apparently should enjoy none—is never explained by Father Curran.

Our confusion concerning the presence of the episcopate within the Catholic uni- versity is hardly surprising. The problem is not a lack of freedom. The problem is that we simply can't keep our eyes off Caesar and Mammon.

JOHN J. CONLEY, S.J.

What Denny did

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: Re: your editorial [Novem- ber 19] on the Reginald Denny trial: Many pundits have glided uncomfortably past Denny's forgiveness of the men who beat him. What to say? That, patronizingly, Denny was a nice guy for forgiving. Or, angrily, that he was a fool. Or, contemp- tuously, that he was a grandstander for em- bracing in court the mothers of his tormentors.

It was disappointing, then, to find in a Catholic journal like *Commonweal* no mention of this remarkable deed—a deed that in many ways is definitive of the Christian life.

Forgiveness does not replace the de- mand for justice. But there seems now in church and culture a distracting clam- or only for the latter: for defining what is a sin; who are sinners; how I have been sinned against, etc. These efforts often seem to founder in the dead end of irreconcilable grievance or in the de- tached and seething iciness of defini- tive judgment. Enter Mr. Denny, beaten nearly to death but bearing the un- heard-of news, pointing toward the way out.

DAVID DeCOSSE

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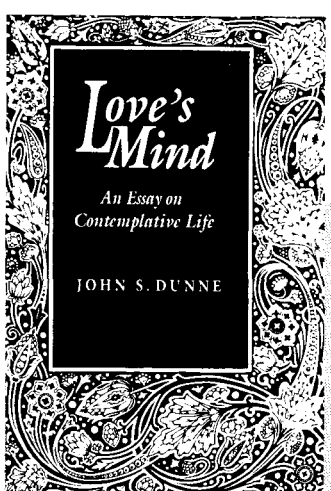

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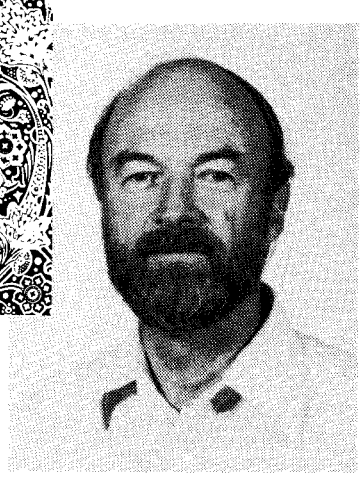

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Sisters of caramel

TYRON BALDWIN

This holiday season I'm thinking, again, about the sisters at Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey, near Dubuque, Iowa. The sisters make and sell caramels (vanilla-, chocolate-, and honey-flavored, as well as chocolate-covered), and I send the sisters' caramels to friends and relatives for Christmas presents despite the obvious objections: I know there is an overabundance of Christmas candy as it is; I know most of us have a perennial concern with our waistlines.

Still, I give the sisters' caramels anyway, because they're easy to mail, yet they're tangible (unlike, say, a gift certificate), and they don't last forever so my friends aren't stuck with some odd knickknack they don't like. I give the sisters' caramels because it's impossible to know what to buy for everyone, though the things all of us want—love, compassion, community; a shield against disease, misfortune, mortality—are identifiable enough. But these things are in short supply, or impossible to give, or both; and because I can't give what I'd like, I give the sisters' caramels—in short, for religious reasons.

I've never spoken with any of the sisters (I could, I suppose; abbey rules governing speech were liberalized in the late seventies), and what little I know about their abbey I read in a forty-eight-page booklet they sent me with last year's candy order.

The sisters are Cistercians of the Strict Observance (also known as Trappistines), and Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey was founded in 1964, by nuns from the Abbey of Mount Saint Mary's, who established the daughter house because of overcrowding at their home convent, in Wrentham, Massachusetts. The Trappistines are the result of seventeenth-century reforms of the Cistercian Order that reestablished monastic silence, manual labor, and asceticism, and, while rules governing Trappistine abbeys have undergone gradual changes since these reforms, the emphasis on a balance between prayer, spiritual study, and manual labor remains central to Cistercian life. The sisters' work making caramels, therefore, is as much about their spiritual relationship with the physical world—a sacramental relationship that recognizes a world infused with God's grace—as it is about economic necessity.

The sisters are more modernized than you might expect; they have a fax machine and a computer, they take credit cards, and they offer discounts on orders of twelve or more boxes of candy shipped to the same address (I assume the abbey has a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on gluttony). But the sisters' prices have a quaint, out-of-i charm—$7.80 for a box of honey caramels $10.40 for the chocolate-covered—and when I give their candy I can't help but feel I'm giving a piece of a simpler, pure way of living in the world.

I am not Catholic, not a member of any organized religion, but that doesn't mean I think I'm too good for one, nor that I think I'm above those who profess religious beliefs. I do not view religion with disdain in fact, I am suspicious of people who are antireligious, though they're good sorts generally—broad-minded, tolerant—who nonetheless, seem to abandon their usual openness to possibility and adopt an almost fundamentalist literalism in the face of religious questions. "Coincidence," they say "It's simple. There is no bigger picture."

When I give the sisters' caramels, then I think I'm trying to give the hope that the sisters' lives hold out for me: that it might be possible to find transcendence in the world, that maybe there is more to life than world-weariness and cynicism.

I can't give hope, of course (who can' who wouldn't if they could?), but when my friends and loved ones call, or send their thank you notes, I will hope that maybe they're thanking me for more than caramels. I'll hope they're thanking me actually, for the example of the sisters lives—their faith in a created world, and in something larger than themselves. I'll hope that maybe my friends and loved ones will be lucky, as I have been, and, in the sisters' faith, find hope, or, at least, find more than candy in the box. □

Tyron Baldwin is a free-lance writer living in New York City.

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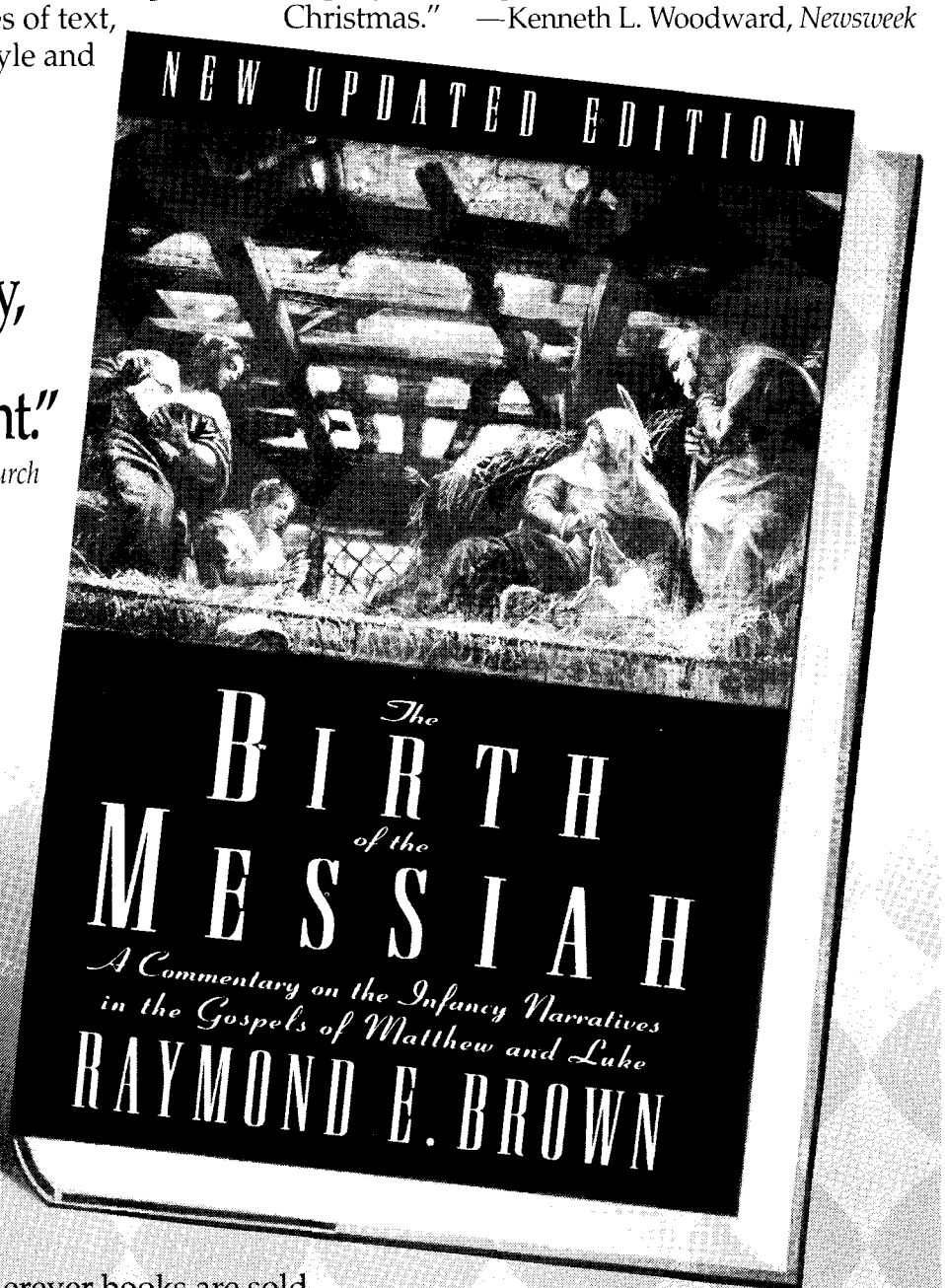

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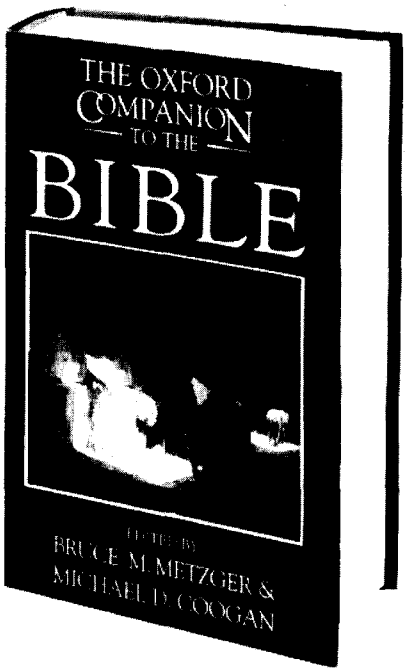

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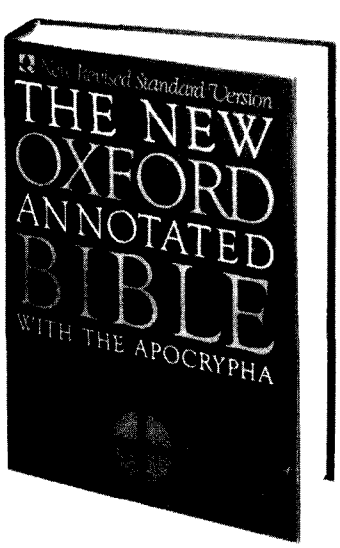

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